

Homework Assignment #1  
Due Tuesday September 18<sup>th</sup>, beginning of class

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### Question 1

#### *Reading*

In his article “Rules of Language”, Steven Pinker argues that irregular past tense forms are produced by a different process than regular ones. The regular past tense of a verb is formed by applying a rule to its root, while the pattern seen among irregular forms can be best modeled by associative memory systems.

Pinker says that, if his views were true, the processes of forming irregular and regular past tense should be distinguishable from “virtually every point of view.”, and then picks several areas to show that that is so. He uses *frequency of words*, *similarity of words*, *participation in other word-formation processes*, and *dissociation in the brain* as test cases for his theory. Pick one of the topics he discusses (from pg. 532 on), and explain in your own words how Pinker argues for his point. Try to be as clear and concise possible. Your text does not need to be long, but it needs to outline the argument you pick.

(Start writing below, and attach additional paper as needed. Please write clearly, and please put your name on the homework and on any paper you attach to your homework, in case they get separated.)

## Question 2

### *Morphologically complex words*

Which of the following English words are morphologically complex? For each bound morpheme in a complex word, list at least two other words that provide evidence for your decision (i.e. words that are both semantically and formally related).

for instance *affordable*

morphologically complex: *afford* + *-able*

evidence: *-able* in *affordable* (can be afforded) is the same as in  
*drinkable* (can be drunk), *imaginable* (can be imagined)

*nights*

*owl*

*indecent*

*bubble*

*searched*

*hopeless*

*redo*

*handful*

*rewriter*

### Question 3

#### *Same or different morpheme*

In each group of words below, two words have a different morphological structure than the rest; one has a different affix, and one has no affix at all. Identify the word with the different affix, and the word with no affix. Remember that we identify an affix by its meaning and its sound (differences in spelling may not always reflect differences in pronunciation).

no suffix/prefix

different suffix/prefix

1. rider, colder, silver, actor

2. bills, melodies, Bess's, access

3. dreaming, inkling, falling, fling

4. boys, lens, windows, calculates

5. untie, uncle, unhappy, unleash

### Question 4

#### *Morpheme segmentation*

Sierra Popoluca is a Mixe-Zoquean language spoken in Veracruz State, Mexico. Just for your information; the symbol [e:] in this problem represents a long [e] sound, and the symbol [ñ] represents an 'ny' sound, as in Spanish (We'll soon look into sounds more carefully.)

1. miñpa	'he comes'	7. se:tpa	'he returns'
2. miñum	'he came'	8. se:tyahpa	'they return'
3. miñyahpa	'they come'	9. se:tyahum	'they returned'
4. miñyahum	'they came'	10. se:tpanam	'he still returns'
5. miñumtyim	'he also came'	11. se:tpatyim	'he also returns'
6. miñyahumtyim	'they also came'	12. se:tyahpanam	'they still return'

Give the Sierra Popoluca morphemes for the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ come

\_\_\_\_\_ still

\_\_\_\_\_ return

\_\_\_\_\_ they

\_\_\_\_\_ past tense

\_\_\_\_\_ also

\_\_\_\_\_ he

\_\_\_\_\_ present tense

Give the Sierra Popoluca forms for the following:

'they still come' \_\_\_\_\_

'he returned' \_\_\_\_\_

Give the English translation for the following:

se:tyahumtyim \_\_\_\_\_

miñumnam \_\_\_\_\_